



NATIONAL RAILROAD

CONNECTING THE ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE U. STATES,
JANUARY 28, 1845.

Mr. PRATT, of New York, presented the memorial of Asa Whitney, a merchant of that State, who has recently returned from China,) praying for the appropriation of a certain portion of the public lands for constructing a Railroad from lake Michigan through the Rocky Mountains to the Oregon Territory, on the shores of the Pacific Ocean.

On presenting this memorial, Mr. P. remarked, that the subject was one of the most important character—alike valuable and magnificent—worthy of the attention and patronage of the American people. That the Oregon question is under discussion in the halls of Congress, and indeed every where throughout the whole land—*now* is emphatically the time for considering most seriously, all the bearings of an important project of this character. For the most extended commercial purposes—for the convenience and advantage of the whole American people—and last, but not least, for the purpose of securing the American interests in the vast regions of Oregon, and promoting the capacities of our common country for warlike defence as well as for all the advantages of peaceful intercourse between the people dwelling on the shores of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, the project of facilitating the intercourse by railroad and steam-power is one of the noblest to which the attention of our fellow citizens and the energies of our Government could now be directed. Such a vast line of communication, once completed, would prove an invaluable auxiliary in cementing the interests of our widely extended territory—in extending the blessings of our free institutions—in strengthening the friendly bonds which link together these States in one grand political confederacy. And, in addition to all this, from the facilities which such a line of intercourse would afford—from the fact that, in furnishing a *direct westerly passage between Europe and China*, it would consummate what Columbus and other navigators long sought to obtain—in addition to all the foregoing considerations, he repeated, this Atlantic and Pacific Railroad, managed with proper liberality, would soon become the *highway of nations*.

In conclusion, Mr. PRATT again invoked for the whole subject the earnest consideration of this House, and of the people at large; especially as this project contemplates the settlement of the country along the route, as the work upon the Railroad advances in its progress towards the Pacific ocean.

After the remarks of Col. PRATT, the memorial, on his motion, was referred to the Committee on Railroads and Canals.

NATIONAL RAILROAD, CONNECTING THE ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC OCEANS.

MEMORIAL.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, in Congress assembled.

Your Memorialist begs respectfully to represent to your honorable body, that rivers, railroads and canals, all the States east and north of the Potomac, connect directly with the waters of the great Lakes. That there is a chain of railroad projection and being built, from New York to the Southern shores of Lake Michigan, crossing all the veins of communication to the Ocean, through all the States east and east of the Ohio river, producing commercial, political, and national results and benefits, which must be seen and felt through all our vast confederacy.

Your Memorialist would further represent to your honorable body, that he devoted much time and attention to the subject of a railroad from Lake Michigan through the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, and that he finds such a practicable, the results from which would be incalculable—far beyond the imagination of man to estimate. To the interior of our wide-spread country, it would be as the heart is to the human body. It would, when all completed, cross all mighty rivers and streams which wend their way to the ocean, through our rich and rich valleys, from Oregon to Maine—a distance of more than three thousand miles.

The incalculable importance of such a chain of roads will readily be seen and appreciated by your honorable body. It would enable us, in the short space of eight days (and perhaps less) to concentrate all the forces of our vast country at a point from Maine to Oregon, in the interior or on the coast; such easy and rapid communication, with such facilities for exchanging the different products of different parts, would bring all our immensely wide-spread population together in one vast city—the moral and social effects of which must harmonize all together as one family, with but one interest—the general good of all.

Your Memorialist respectfully represents further to your honorable body, that the roads from New York to Lake Michigan, a distance of eight hundred and fifty miles, will no doubt be completed by the States through which they pass, or by private individuals. That from Lake Michigan to the mouth of the Columbia river, the Pacific, is two thousand one hundred and sixty miles; making from New York to the Pacific three thousand miles, and can be performed in eight days. From the Columbia river to the Sandwich Islands is two thousand one hundred miles; making from New York to the Sandwich Islands five thousand one hundred miles. From the Columbia river to Japan, is five thousand six hundred miles; making from New York to Japan eight thousand six hundred miles. From Columbia river to Amoy, China, (the port nearest to the tea and silk provinces,) is six thousand two hundred miles; making from New York to Amoy, only nine thousand two hundred miles, which, with a railroad to the Pacific, and thence to China by steamers, can be performed in thirty days, being now a sailing distance of nearly seventeen thousand miles, and requiring from one hundred to one hundred and fifty days for its performance. Then the drills and sheetings of Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts, and other manufactures of the United States, may be transported to China in thirty days; and the teas and rich silks of China, in exchange, come to New Orleans, to Charleston, to Washington, to Baltimore, to Philadelphia, to New York, and to Boston, in thirty days more.

Comment is unnecessary. Your honorable body will readily see the revolution wrought by this, in the entire commerce of the world; and that this must inevitably be its greatest channel—when the rich freights from the waters of the Mississippi and the Hudson will fill to overflowing with the products of all the earth, the store-houses of New York and New Orleans, the great marts of the commerce of the world, while each State and every town in our vast confederacy would receive its just proportion of influence and benefits, compared

its vicinity to, or facility to communicate with, any of the rivers, canals, or rail-roads crossed by this great road.

Your Memorialist would respectfully represent to your honorable body, *the political importance of the project*—that, affording a communication from Washington to the Columbia river in less than eight days, a naval depot, with a comparatively small navy, would command the Pacific, the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans, and the Chinese seas.

Your Memorialist begs respectfully to represent further to your honorable body, that he can see no ways or means by which this great and important object can be accomplished for ages to come, except by a *grant of a sufficient quantity of the public domain*; and your Memorialist believes that from the proceeds of such a grant, he will be enabled to complete said road in a reasonable time, and at the same time settle this vast region of country, so far as the lands may be found suited to cultivation, with an industrious and frugal people; thus, in a comparatively short space of time, accomplishing what would otherwise require ages, and thus at once giving us the power of dictation to those who will not long remain satisfied without an attempt to dictate to us.

Our system of free Government works so well, diffusing so much intelligence, dispensing equal justice, and ensuring safety to all, and producing so much comfort and prosperity, that its influence must, like a mighty flood, sweep away all other systems. But, let us not flatter ourselves that this overwhelming current is not to meet resistance; for to us directly will that resistance be applied; and your Memorialist believes that we must yet meet the desperate and final struggle which will perpetuate our system and religious and civil liberty.

Your honorable body are aware of the over-population of Europe; and your Memorialist would respectfully represent that, by the application of machinery and substitution for manual labor, the latter no longer receives its just or sufficient reward; and thousands, in the fear of starvation at home, are driven to our shores, hoping, from our wide-spread and fertile soil, to find a rich reward for their labors. Many of them ignorant, and all inexperienced, having been herded together in large numbers at home, dread separation, even from misery—fear the wilderness or the prairie, and refuse to leave the city. Their small means soon exhausted, they are abundance around them, almost without price; but that small price they can no longer pay. Necessity plunges them into vice, and perhaps crime; and they become burdensome to our citizens—all which evils are increasing to an alarming extent; and your Memorialist believes they must increase, unless there can be some great and important point in our interior to which such emigrants can be attracted immediately on their landing, and where their little means, with their labor, can purchase lands, where they will escape the tempting vices of our cities, and where they will have a home, and their labor from their *own* soil will produce, not only their daily bread, but, in time, an affluence of which they could never have dreamed in their native land.

Your Memorialist believes that this road will be the great and desirable point of attraction; that it will relieve our cities from a vast amount of misery, vice, crime, and taxation; that it will take the poor unfortunates to a land where they will be compelled to labor for a subsistence, and as they will soon find that their labor and efforts receive a just and sufficient reward, finding themselves surrounded with comfort and plenty, the reward of their own toil, their energies will kindle into a flame of ambition and desire, and we shall be enabled to educate them to our system—to industry, prosperity, and virtue.

Your memorialist would further respectfully represent to your honorable body, that, from an estimate as near accurate as can be made short of an actual survey, the cost of said road, to be built in a safe, good, and substantial manner, will be about \$50,000,000; and as the road cannot, from the situation of the uninhabited country through which it will pass, earn any thing, or but little, before its completion, then a further sum will be required to keep it in operation, repairs, &c., &c., &c., of \$15,000,000—making the total estimated cost of said road, when complete, the sum of \$65,000,000.

It may require some years before the earnings of said road, at the low rate of tolls necessary for its complete success, can be much, if any thing, beyond its current expenses for repairs, &c., &c., &c.; but, after a comparatively short period of years, and at the very lowest possible rate of tolls, it must earn more than ample for its repairs and expenses. It would be the only channel for the commerce of all the

western coast of Mexico and South America, of the Sandwich Islands, Japan, all China, Manilla, Australia, Java, Singapore, Calcutta, and Bombay—not only all ours, but the commerce of all Europe, to the most of these places, must pass this road. Your memorialist says *must*, because the saving of time, so all important to the merchant, from the long and hazardous voyage around either of the Capes, would compel it; and in a few years would be built up towns, cities, and villages, from the lake to the ocean, which would alone support the road.

Being built from the public lands, the road should be free, except so far as sufficient for the necessary expenses of keeping it in operation, repairs, &c., &c.; and your memorialist believes that, at a very low rate of tolls, a sum would be gained sufficient, after all current expenses, to make a handsome distribution for public education; and as a part of the earnings of the road will be from foreign commerce, your memorialist begs respectfully to submit the subject to your wise consideration.

Your memorialist respectfully further represents to your honorable body, that, from the knowledge he can procure, he finds that the lands for a long distance east of the mountains are of little or no value for culture; that through and for some distance beyond the mountains would also be of very little if any value; and therefore your memorialist is satisfied that it will require an entire tract of sixty miles in width from as near to Lake Michigan as the unappropriated lands commence to the Pacific Ocean. Therefore, in view of all the important considerations here set forth, your memorialist is induced to pray that your honorable body will grant to himself, his heirs and assigns, such tract of land, the proceeds of which to be strictly and faithfully applied to the building and completing the said road—always with such checks and guarantees to your honorable body as shall secure a faithful performance of all the obligations and duties of your memorialist; and that, after the faithful completion of this great work, should any lands remain unsold, or any moneys due for lands, or any balance of moneys received for lands sold, and which have not been required for the building of this road, then all and every of them shall belong to your memorialist, his heirs and assigns forever.

Your memorialist prays further that your honorable body will order a survey of said route, to commence at some point to be fixed upon, as most desirable, on the shores of Lake Michigan, between the 42d and 45th degrees of north latitude; thence west to the gap or pass in the mountains; and thence by the most practicable route to the Pacific ocean.

Your memorialist would respectfully represent one further consideration to your honorable body—that, in his opinion, Oregon must fast fill up with an industrious, enterprising people from our States, and that they will soon attract and draw to them people from the different States of Europe, all expecting to share in the benefits of our free government, claiming its care and protection; but the difficulty of access to them either by land or water will forbid such an hope. And your memorialist believes that the time is not far distant when Oregon must become a State of such magnitude and importance, as, unless this rapid mode of intercommunication shall be employed in preserving the Union, to compel the establishment of a separate government—a separate nation, which will have cities, ports, and harbors, all free, inviting all the nations of the earth to a free trade with them, where they will control and monopolize the valuable fisheries of the Pacific, control the coast trade of Mexico and South America, of Sandwich Islands, Japan and all China, and be our most dangerous and successful rivals in the commerce of the world. But your memorialist believes that this road will unite them to us, enabling them to receive the protecting care of our Government, sharing in its blessings, benefits, and prosperity, and imparting to us our share of the great benefits from their local position, enterprise, and industry. But your honorable body will see all this and more, and your memorialist, as in duty bound, will ever pray,

A. WHITNEY.

January 28, 1845.

The honorable Mr. Dickenson from New York presented in the Senate, and the honorable Mr. Z. Pratt presented in the House—to be printed and referred to the Committee on Roads and Canals.